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U.S. envoy has a Russian chauffeur

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MOSCOW — Wherever U.S. Ambassador Arthur A. Hartman goes here in his official Cadillac Fleetwood, he is accompanied by his driver.

Natural enough?

Yes, except that his driver is a Russian, who was handpicked for the job by Soviet authorities and can be expected to report on the ambassador's every movement and on his every conversation in the car.

The ambassador's driver is just one of the U.S. Embassy's 205 Soviet employees, whose presence is causing security concerns here and heated political controversy in Washington.

"Security is a very tricky business. There is never anything like absolute security," says a State Department official in Washington.

The Soviets are aiming at absolute security, however.

In most foreign countries — including China — Soviet embassies do not hire any locals at all. In Washington, fewer than a dozen Americans are on the payroll as language teachers or editors.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Embassy here has Soviets working not only as language teachers, mechanics, janitors, maids and handymen but also in such sensitive positions as drivers and cashiers.

Until a few months ago, the Soviet employees were not even required to wear identification tags as they moved about the cavernous Embassy building on Tchaikovsky Street.

Because of congressional pressure, inspections by security teams and disclosures that the Embassy was bugged by the Soviets as recently as 1984, things are changing.

"We are in the process of making

changes in Moscow that will lead to fewer Soviets being employed in the Embassy," explains one Washington official.

But no major improvement in the Embassy security is likely to occur until a new chancery building costing more than \$100 million is finished.

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That building will be the first structure specifically designed to house an Embassy that the U.S. has had in Moscow since 1933, when diplomatic relations between the two countries were reestablished. The new Embassy building was supposed to be completed by the end of last year, but it is still "a couple of years off" because of delays by Soviet construction crews.

The 205 Soviet employees, overall security and delays in the construction of the new Embassy building have become a hot topic on Capitol Hill, largely because of a controversy surrounding the new embassy the Soviet government has been building on a hilltop north of Georgetown.

The site is an electronic eavesdropper's dream. It provides a clear line of sight to the State Department, the White House, the Pentagon, the Commerce Department and such key missions as the British, West German and French embassies.

What is more, the Soviet Union's new Embassy site offers a largely unobstructed view of several key microwave relay towers that transmit most telephone and data communications from Washington to other East Coast cities.

"In intelligence circles the site of the new Soviet Embassy in Washington is considered the biggest giveaway since Peter Minuit got Manhattan in 1626 for the equivalent of \$24," *The New York Times* once reported.

Although the new U.S. Embassy in Moscow is next to the chief administration quarters of the Russian republic and Comecon, the Soviet bloc's economic assistance council, it offers no comparable eavesdropping potential.

How the Soviets obtained the hilltop site to the north of Georgetown remains the subject of considerable debate in Washington, where the most cynical are even suggesting a conspiracy.

In fact, the Soviets were first offered a site in the Chevy Chase section, near the Maryland-District of Columbia line. Local property owners opposed this location, however, and they won.

Meanwhile, the Americans — whose Embassy was just across from the Kremlin before Stalin ordered it transferred — were pondering where to move from the current Tchaikovsky Street building in midtown Moscow.

The United States was first offered a site on Lenin Hill, which offers a commanding view of Moscow. But that site was miles from the city's center and "basically there was a feeling that the Soviets wanted to push us out of town," one official recalled.

Finally, the Soviets came up with a site just a few hundred yards from the current chancery. The Americans, in turn, offered the Soviets the land north of Georgetown — near the Washington Cathedral — where there used to be a veterans' hospital.

The new Soviet Embassy's eavesdropping advantages in Washington have irked congressional critics, who also complain about the delays in construction of the new U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

While completion of the chancery is at least two years away and Embassy families will have to wait at least another year before they can begin moving in, the Soviet chancery in Washington is ready and diplomats have been living in its apartments since 1979.

Under a reciprocal agreement, the Soviets cannot occupy their chancery until the American chancery is finished. But critics say the Americans yielded too easily in allowing the Soviets to move in.

An American official defended the deal, however. He said the Americans were able to negotiate a "major cutdown" in the U.S. Embassy's construction price and to get concessions for Moscow's Anglo-American School, which many Embassy dependents attend.

Many congressional critics also advocate strict Soviet-American parity in diplomatic personnel. Because the Soviets insist on employing their nationals inside their Embassy, they have a numerical advantage in Washington.

In Moscow, the Soviets also have an advantage because of their employment practices. The United States Embassy cannot make any direct hires of Soviet nationals. In-

stead, it has to hire from among candidates who are offered to it by the Diplomatic Service Bureau, a Soviet organization presumed to have a close working relationship with the KGB.

Once a person is hired, it is the Diplomatic Service Bureau, not the American Embassy, which decides the employee's fate.

What can happen was illustrated earlier this year after the Americans challenged a Service Bureau proposal under which the Embassy's Soviet employees no longer would have been paid directly in rubles but all their salaries would have gone, in dollars, to the Service Bureau.

The Soviets backed down on changing the payment method, but they retaliated by firing Ambassador Hartman's Russian secretary from her job and also from the privileged and well-paying ranks of the Service Bureau.

Mr. Hartman was abroad when

this happened. Later, he tried to retaliate the best way he could — by firing the Embassy's Soviet barber!

Disclosures earlier this year that the Soviets bugged the U.S. Embassy at least from 1982 to 1984 with sensing devices capable of picking up what was written on Embassy typewriters have increased security consciousness here.

Now access even by Americans to the few relatively secure areas in the Embassy has been strictly curtailed.

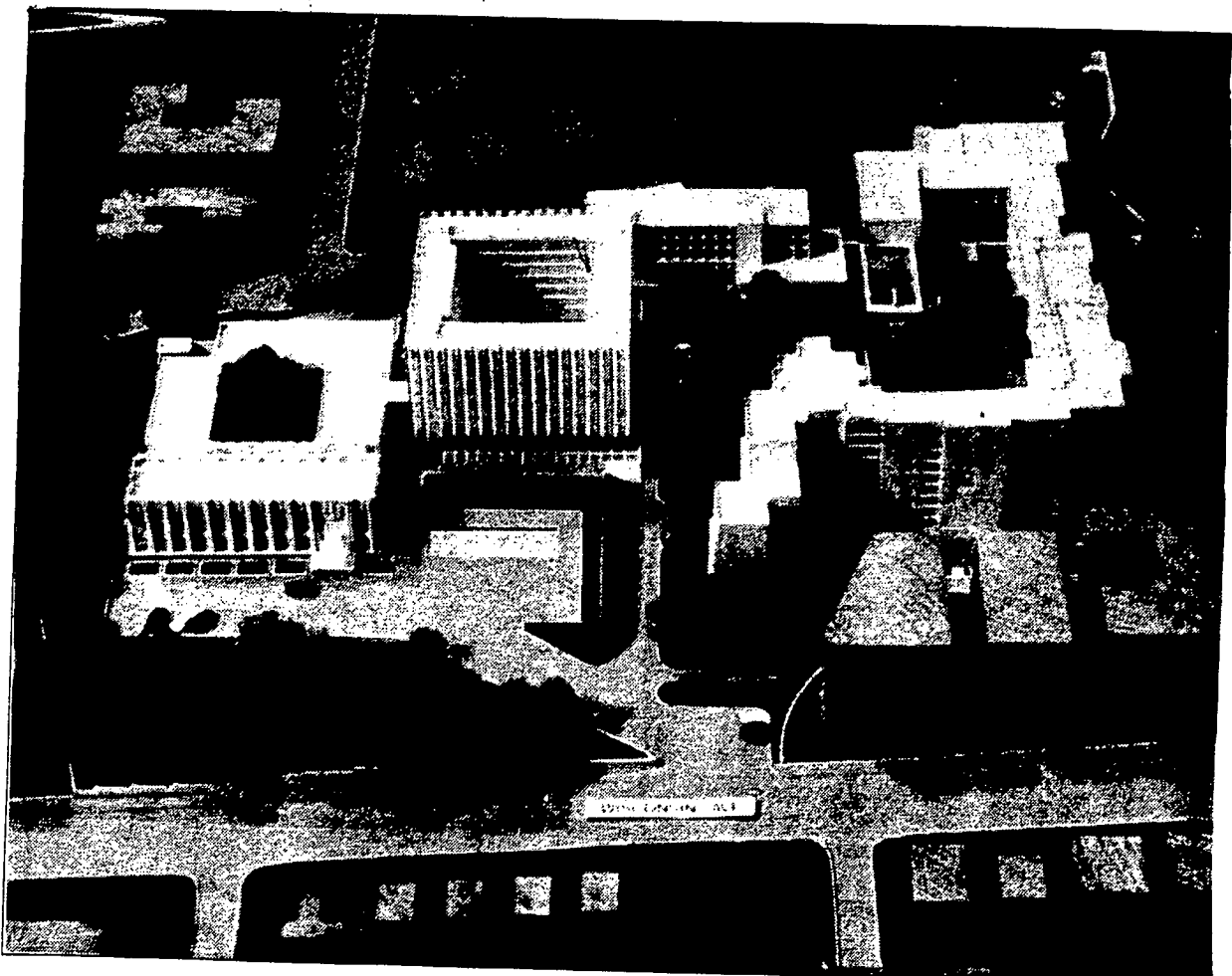
In the latest exposed case of Soviet eavesdropping, tiny sensing devices were installed in about a dozen

Embassy typewriters.

"The devices picked up the contents of documents typed by Embassy secretaries and transmitted them to antennas hidden in the Embassy walls," reported CBS News, which broke the story.

The Soviets have successfully penetrated the U.S. Embassy before. For 12 years until 1964, they had 44 microphones operating undetected in the walls of the Embassy.

In 1978, when a fire damaged the upper floors of the Embassy, a spy antenna was discovered during the cleanup.



Construction of Soviet Embassy complex on a Washington hilltop is well advanced. The site — north of Georgetown and near the Washington Cathedral — is regarded as an electronic eavesdropper's dream.

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